

Scott Urbanowski

5093 BLAINE AVE. SE, KENTWOOD, MI 49508
(616) 334-8477 | SCOTT.URBANOWSKI@GMAIL.COM

September 21, 2021

Committee on Elections and Ethics
Michigan House of Representatives
Anderson House Office Building
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Committee Members:

As a communications and digital media professional and an election worker, I'm very interested in matters pertaining to technology and transparency in government. For this reason, I'm writing to offer testimony on the bills before you in today's meeting of the Committee on Elections and Ethics.

House Bill 5258

I have been elected as a precinct delegate eight times and have run for other offices as well. Because of this, I have received a number of ballot proofs from the Kent County clerk's office. House Bill 5258 is a common-sense reform that would allow county clerks' offices to save tax dollars on printing and postage.

House Bill 5252

As committee members are undoubtedly aware, sponsors of an initiative petition are already required to create an impartial summary of the proposal and include it on the petition. This bill appears to require the Secretary of State to do the same, which would create an unnecessary redundancy. More concerning, this bill does not require that the summary from the Secretary of State be impartial. Given how hard our Bureau of Elections staff works, it makes little sense to put another thing on their plate that doesn't appear to add to transparency behind ballot proposals.

House Bill 5288

In the year 2000, the legislature unanimously passed, and Governor John Engler signed, the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act, P.A. 305 of 2000. Section 7(4) of this act states: "If a law requires a signature, an electronic signature satisfies the law." By the time the legislature and governor passed this act, it was clear that electronic signatures could be trusted just like "wet" signatures. Technology has only improved greatly in the past 21 years, and there is even less reason to doubt that an electronics signature can be trusted now.

Prohibiting electronic applications would also make it harder for people with disabilities or limited financial means to apply for an absentee ballot. Not everyone can afford a printer and print an application from home. Even voters who do have a printer would still have to either pay for postage; spend time and money traveling to their city or township clerk's office or dropbox; or have a family member do the same. There is no legitimate reason to make voting harder by rolling back the clock to when electronic signatures were not accepted.

House Bill 5268

This bill is undoubtedly in response to the decision by the current Secretary of State to send applications to all registered voters ahead of the May, August, and November 2020 elections. Had this prohibition been in effect last year, it's likely that polling places would've been even more crowded during the pandemic, adding to the risk that COVID-19 would've spread more quickly and put even greater strain on our medical professionals.

In 2018, we voters made it clear: we want it to be easier to vote. By giving everyone an absentee ballot application and allowing voters to request an absentee ballot online, the Secretary of State has made it easier than ever for voters to exercise our rights under the Michigan Constitution to vote absentee. I strongly oppose any bills that would undermine that.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Scott Urbanowski